

United States Arsenal Artillery Shed
(now Porter Academy Chapel)
167 Ashley Avenue (southwest corner Ashley
Avenue and Bee Street)
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-296

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PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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UNITED STATES ARSENAL ARTILLERY SHED
(NOW PORTER ACADEMY CHAPEL)

Address: 167 Ashley Avenue (southwest corner Ashley Avenue and Bee Street), Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina.

Present Owner: Medical College of South Carolina, 16 Lucas Street, Charleston, South Carolina.

Present Occupant: Porter Academy.

Present Use: Religious.

Brief Statement of Significance: A mid-19th century military building, greatly altered.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

1. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Government; granted to Trustees of the Holy Communion Church Institute by joint resolution of Congress, December 19, 1879. Name changed to Porter Academy in 1886.
Sold to Medical College of South Carolina, August 30, 1963.
2. Date of Erection: Mid-19th century
3. Notes on Original Plan and Construction: Apparently rectangular, with open arcading.
4. Notes on Known Alterations and Additions: Roof removed, walls raised four feet, new open-timber truss roof added, stained glass windows installed, in 1883. In recent times the interior orientation was reversed, concrete floor installed.
5. Sources of Information: A. Toomer Porter, Led On (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898).
News and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, August 31, 1963.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A utilitarian building ingeniously converted into a chapel of the late 19th century.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories and bays, over-all dimensions, layout: One story; five bays long; about 30'x85', main portion; rectangular, with two small end pavilions on one side.
2. Wall construction: Red brick.
3. Structural system, framing: Load bearing brick walls, open-timber roof with scissors trusses.
4. Openings: Openings with semielliptical arches formerly extended to floor level; most have been converted to windows by filling in lower portion with brick; two on the east wall have been filled completely.
 - a. Doors and doorways: One door opens to Bee Street on the north, two open on the south to the campus. The southwest door is apparently modern, inserted into an arched opening. The other two are set in plain rectangular openings, and appear older; they have four-panel doors.
 - b. Windows: Elliptical-headed windows have three wooden mullions and are glazed with colored glass, mostly in geometrical patterns. Three windows on east wall, the one in the center being largest, have pointed (two-centered) arches. Several memorial windows bear dates varying from the 1870's to 1920's.
5. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof of high pitch, covered with modern composition shingles.
 - b. Cornice: Simple wooden cornice.
 - c. Gable: A cross surmounts the east gable.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Rectangular nave, with platform and altar at eastern end, adjoined by an alcove serving as organ room and sacristy. A small chaplain's office projects at the southwest corner. The original (1883) orientation appears to have been just the opposite, with altar at the west end.
2. Flooring: Modern concrete floor in three descending levels, and raised platform at the east end.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Wainscoting of vertical boards, plastered above. There is a simple bracketed wooden cornice. The roof construction is exposed.
4. Furniture: A row of benches with paneled ends on each side of a center aisle.

- D. Site: This building occupies the northeast corner of the Academy campus, being on the sidewalk line of Ashley Avenue and Bee Street.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1963.